



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

III — *Ruscinia*

BY PROF. E. WHITNEY MARTIN

LELAND STANFORD JR. UNIVERSITY

IN an Old-English Glossary — published by Goetz in *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, v — occur the words *acalantis*, *vel luscinia vel roscinia*, *nectegela*, which are assigned by Goetz to the eighth century. Their meaning is of course obvious. The form *ruscinia* as a parallel for *luscinia* appears also in a ninth century Ms given by Diez, *Romanisches Wörterbuch*, s.v., citing Mone's *Anzeiger*, vii, 148. These are the Roman sources for the word *ruscinia*. In Latin, as is well known, the everyday name for the nightingale is *luscinia* or *lusciniola*, but in the Romance languages the corresponding names have regularly an initial *r*-, as in *rossignol*, *rossignuolo*, and others.

This paper is an attempt to interpret the glossema above, with its association of the *acalanthis*, *luscinia*, and *ruscinia*, and to present two or three possible theories for the shift from *l*- to *r*- in the two forms. It assumes that the initial *r*- in the Latin variants is the source of that in the later Romance forms. It attempts to treat the matter, in a broad way, with a glance at the natural history, the folk-lore, and the poetic associations, which are inseparably connected with the problem. The subject is of no great importance, and is perhaps justified only in the light of the rather considerable occasional literature that has grown up about it.

The last discussion, so far as I know, is by Professor E. W. Fay, in *Modern Language Notes*, xviii, 195. He also limits the problem to Latin times, and asserts the conviction that the explanations of the shift from *l*- to *r*- in the Romance languages, which attempt to trace the *r*- forms from *luscinia*, are beside the mark. He states the problem with the query "will not the variation of *l*- and *r*- in the Romance languages meet its most satisfactory, as well as its simplest, explanation by appealing to *ruscinia* as a popular etymology, in Low Latin times, of *luscinia*?"

He then attempts to establish this popular etymology by

supposing that the nightingale frequents the *ruscus* of ancient times, now known as *ruscus aculeatus* (thorn-bush or butcher's broom), which is, we may add, a low shrub found distributed over large areas in Southern Europe. Thus in popular parlance the true name *luscini*, shifted to *ruscini*, connoting the 'thorn-bush-singer,' because of this assumed direct association of the nightingale with the shrub *ruscus*.

First, however, before discussing in detail Professor Fay's hypothesis, for the sake of completeness, an earlier theory should be examined in this connection. This was first suggested, I believe, by Grammont, in his monograph, *La Dissimilation consonantique*. It is based upon the theory that the *r*- in the derivatives of *hirundinella* may have changed the *l*- of *lusciniola* through the association of the two birds. While preferring this theory, Grammont apparently did not wholly give up the idea that the shift in question may be due to initial dissimilation in the original *lusciniolum* (*op. cit.* 118). Grammont seems to have been unacquainted with the glosses, for he ignores them and apparently assumes that the shift took place after Roman times. The most cogent points of contact cited by him are the myth of Philomela and Procne, the association of the two birds as harbingers of spring, and the association of the *rossignol de muraille* and the *hirondelle* in the country life of modern France.

His evidence for the shift, taken as a phenomenon of the later times, is inadequate and unconvincing. The average reader will agree with Gaston Paris, *Journal des Savants*, Février, 1898, where, in a review of Grammont's work, he refers to both hypotheses: "M. Grammont, tout en croyant que les formes romanes de *lusciniolum* qui remplacent l'*r* initiale par une *l* peuvent être dues à une dissimilation, préfère expliquer l'*r* par l'influence de *hirundinem*. Cette hypothèse me paraît peu vraisemblable; mais il faut réellement admettre que l'*r* de *rossignol* et de ses pareils n'est pas due à la dissimilation, puisqu'on rencontre en bas latin la form *roscinia*, où la dissimilation ne saurait être en cause." The statement of the distinguished reviewer is seemingly conclusive for the dissimilation theory. In the earlier life of Roman times,

however, the association of the two birds was so intimate and many-sided that the association theory must not be so hastily dismissed. The Romance forms for *hirundo* — *rondinella*, *rondola*, and others — may point to a common, perhaps dialectic, byform of *hirundinella* without the initial syllable. Similar cases of procope are, of course, easily found. Even in the realm of popular ornithological nomenclature an example is not wanting. Ernout, *Le Parler de Préneſte d'après les Inscriptions*, 16, gives among others, *conea* as the Praenestine form for *ciconia*, 'stork.' His source, of course, is the well-known passage from Plautus, *Truc.* 688:

AST. Perii, 'rabonem.' quam esse dicam hanc beluam?
 Quin tu arrabonem dicis? STR. 'A' facio lucri,
 Ut Praenestinis 'conea' est ciconia.

If *ciconia* was shortened to *conea*, *hirundinella* shortened to *rundinella* is not surprising. Now, would (*hi*)*rundinella* react upon *lusciniola* and produce the result sought for? With no theory to prove, Otto Keller, *Thiere des classischen Alterthums*, 319, remarks, "Einer der eigenthümlichsten und bei andern Völkern nicht vorkommenden ist die enge Verwandtschaft Philomelens mit der Schwalbe; sie beruht auf manchen Berührungspunkten, in welchen die beiden Vögel nach der Anschauung des Alterthums zusammentrafen."

Let us examine this in some detail. First there is the well-known myth of Philomela and Procne. In nearly all Greek writers Philomela is the swallow, and Procne the nightingale. In this connection we should note that they are *sisters*, the daughters of Pandion. In nearly all Roman writers these names are reversed, which, again, was a constant source of the confusion. In the sixth Eclogue of Virgil Philomela seems best taken as the swallow, following the Greek tradition. Yet the ambiguity of the whole passage is such that Conington leaves it with the remark that it "certainly looks like a confusion of the habits of the nightingale and swallow." The same ambiguity appears in Hor. *Od.* iv, 12, and in a most remarkable way in Sen. *Her. Oet.* 200 ff. Much of this confusion in the Roman poets is due, doubtless, to the

fact that the habits of the two birds and the dramatic incidents of the metamorphosis were never, in fact could not be, completely harmonized.

In the fourth Georgic Virgil clearly follows the Roman tradition and makes Philomela the nightingale. A later writer, however, speaks of Philomela as the swallow, "who, trustful bird that she is, hangs her nest in the homes of men." Virgil has the swallows in mind in the two graceful lines:

Evandrum ex humili tecto lux suscitât alma
Et matutini volucrum sub culmine cantus. — *Aen.* viii, 455.

Both birds were thought of as harbingers of spring, like the robin and bluebird in our own Eastern States. For the nightingale in this regard, cf. Hom. *Od.* xix, 519; Arist. *Av.* 684; Sapph. fr. 39 Bk. Among the Romans the swallow, here, plays the chief rôle. Among many other passages the following are rather striking:

Ver blandum viget arvis, et adest hospes hirundo.
— Varro, *Sat. Inc.*, Bährens, *P. M.* iv, 223.
Te, dulcis amice, reviset,
Cum Zephyris, si concedes, et hirundine prima.
— Hor. *Epist.* i, 7, 12-13.

Fallimur, an veris prae-nuntia venit hirundo
Nec metuit, ne qua versa recurrat hiemps?
Saepe tamen, Procne, nimium properasse quereris,
Virque tuo Tiresus frigore laetus erit. — Ov. *Fasti*, ii, 853 ff.

The two birds seem to have been associated in the rites of Adonis, which were celebrated in the early springtime. Cf. Thompson, *Glossary of Greek Birds*, 13-14.

The element of sadness in the songs of the two birds was well-nigh universally recognized as a common trait throughout the poetry and lore of both Greeks and Romans. Among the latter this idea so outshadows all other attributes of the nightingale's song that *lusciniâ* itself seems best taken as **luges-ciniâ*, the 'grief-singer.'

Pischinger, in his monograph, *Der Vogelgesang bei den griechischen Dichtern des klassischen Altertums*, shows that this tone of sadness is, perhaps, the most common trait in

the songs, not only of the nightingale and swallow, but also of the halcyon and swan. This attitude was based upon a conception of the song as an outpouring of grief, supposed to be felt by the unfortunate metamorphosed being, whose life had been merged in that of the bird in question. In this regard the Roman poets followed the Greek tradition almost *in toto*. For the nightingale's song from this point of view, cf. Cat. 65, 13; Virg. *Ecl.* 6, 78; *Georg.* iv, 511; Prop. iii, 11, 4; Ov. *Tr.* ii, 389; *Fast.* iv, 481; *Am.* ii, 6, 6; Mart. xiv, 75; *Cons. ad Liv.* 105; *Pervig. Ven.* 86. In several of these citations (and there are others) the nightingale is clearly portrayed, as we should expect, as singing by *night*, a fact which adds point to the remark of Keller (*op. cit.* 467): "Sprachwidrig ist die gewöhnliche, auch bei Weise, *Griechische Wörter im Latein.* S. 107, wieder vorgebrachte Etymologie von *lux* und *canere*." This derivation, with its companion **luscinia*, 'the twilight singer,' strangely enough, continues to find defenders. Walde, *Lat. etymologisches Wörterbuch, s.v.*, wavers between the two.

The more modern touch of joy in the song, as in the following passage, is relatively speaking very rare in the ancient poets:

Ceu patrio super alta grues Aquilone fugatae
cum videre Pharon, tunc aethera latius implent,
tunc *hilari* clangore sonant; iuvat orbe sereno
contempsisse nives et frigora solvere Nilo.

—Stat. *Theb.* xii, 515.

Evidently as a mourner, and a singer of sad funeral refrains, we find the *luscinia* portrayed in the wall-paintings of Roman grave monuments. The *hirundo* plays the same part; in fact, on Sophocles' tomb we are told that a swallow was represented. A Roman grave on the Via Latina has the two birds side by side, and an accompanying distich gives their names. This association of the two birds with the dead can rest only upon the ancient feeling that there was inherent sadness in their songs. This feeling, no doubt, also underlies several of the bird metamorphosis myths, for without this assumption they cannot be rationalized.

The describing epithets of the two birds are interchanged in such a way as to defy, at times, all rational individual identification. Both, for example, are lugubrious, both are garrulous, both in Greek are *ξουθὸς* in song and color.

In Moschus (if the text be sound) the two birds are associated in the same habitat, and to-day, according to Kaup's *Thierreich*, in both Greece and Italy the swallow (*hirundo urbica*) and the nightingale frequent in strikingly common proximity the same chosen localities.

And lastly, to add one more touch of contact, we are told by Artemidorus that in the dream lore of the Greeks the two birds have almost the same symbolism. Thus much for the lore. For several of the above and many other points of association, *v. Keller, op. cit.* 315.

I can at this time point to only one close parallel in Latin for such a shift of the initial *l*- to *r*-, due to association. Porphyrio, on Hor. *Epist.* ii, 2, 209, seems to imply that the festival of Lemuria was called Remuria by the people, who associated the festival, with its appeasing of ghosts, *lemures*, with Remus and the walls where he met his death. Tradition, too, ascribed the origin of the festival to Romulus. Cf. Otto Keller, *Lateinische Volks-Etymologie*, 40.

This theory for the change, through association, is attractive, and to some it may appear adequate and convincing, yet is it cogent enough to have produced the change demanded? If we accept it, how shall we explain the presence of the bird *acalanthis* in the glosses and in a Servian note to be presented immediately?

This much, however, is certainly true, that if the origin of the form *ruscinia* can be established on some other theory which will more nearly meet all the phases of the problem, then the absolutely unique associations presented in support of Grammont's theory may well have been a very strong influence in sustaining the parallel forms in *r*-.

To return now to Professor Fay's suggested solution of the problem; namely, that the form *ruscinia* is due to the direct association, in the folk-etymology, of the nightingale with the *ruscus*. In the *Cl. Rev.* xviii, 307, he repeats this hypothesis

and adds that "he will be grateful for any evidence to confirm or disprove the fact supposed ; namely, that the butcher's broom (*ruscus aculeatus*) in Southern Italy is a favorite haunt of the nightingale."

This hypothesis is very plausible. It meets the philological situation admirably, and we must be grateful to Professor Fay for suggesting it. There is, however, one thing against it which will soon appear. Not trusting my own amateurish observations of the bird in question, which did not confirm the theory in hand, I asked my colleague, Professor Harold Heath, who was spending a year at Naples in the International Zoölogical Station of that city (among other bird problems of the ancient world), to observe the nightingales also, especially in relation to their supposed association with the *ruscus*.

I am deeply grateful to him for his report which is further confirmed by the following note from Professor Umberto Pierantoni, a distinguished professor of zoölogy at the University of Naples.

"The nightingale," says Professor Pierantoni, "is very common in Italy. It is *not* found in the plant (*ruscus aculeatus*), but dwells among the high trees, frequenting especially the poplar tree. It lives also in the forests, near humid places, where it breeds in May, and sings preferably during the spring, in the evening and by night." Professor Pierantoni's observation seems conclusive as regards the problem before us, and at the same time adds new reality to part of Virgil's beautiful though touching scene in the fourth Georgic, where he portrays the nightingale in a poplar tree bemoaning the loss of her nestlings.

Considering all the evidence, the writer is inclined to believe that the following may well be the true solution of the difficulty. The name *ruscinia* was first applied by the people to a bird which really does frequent in great numbers the wide areas of *ruscus* so common everywhere in Italy. This bird was known also to the more learned, by the Greek name *acalanthis*. This bird was then associated in the folk-observation with the nightingale, and in time from this association and the popular confusion of the two birds, the name *ruscinia*

was applied also to the nightingale. This theory explains the associations in the glossary: *acalanthis*, *vel luscinia vel ruscinia*, *nectigal*. Such confusions are commonplaces in ornithological nomenclatures. Our own mocking-bird furnishes many parallels. In many parts of this country the brown-thrush, likewise a great singer and mimic, is dubbed the French mocking-bird. In other parts the name "mocking-bird" is applied to two different species of wrens remarkable for the sweetness of their songs. In England the name "mock-nightingale" is frequently applied to the black-cap and to the sedge-warbler. The latter, in fact, furnishes almost a complete parallel to the case in hand. The bird is called the sedge-warbler from its habitat. So the ruscinia, by our theory. It is then named the mock-nightingale from the sweetness of its song. So the ruscinia may well, from its song, have been associated with the real nightingale (*luscinia*), resulting at last in a confusion of the former name with the original (*luscinia*), until the two existed side by side as names for the nightingale. If other parallels are needed, one may instance the cardinal grosbeak, which in the East is very commonly known as the Virginian nightingale, while in France the redstart is commonly called the *rossignol de muraille*.

The real identification of the *acalanthis* is, however, as yet uncertain. Thompson in his *Glossary of Greek Birds*, and Neri in his monograph *Gli animali nelle opere di Virgilio*, identify it with the goldfinch. This is not convincing, on grounds which I cannot discuss at this time. Warde Fowler, though in this regard not so well known in this country, is an ardent observer of the ways of birds. In one of the charming books, which have resulted from this delightful pastime, *A Year with the Birds*, 243, he makes a very strong case for identifying the *acalanthis* as one of the warblers. He notes in passing that at least one of the *silvidae*, the sedge-warbler, oftentimes carries its song far into the night.

Aristotle, *Hist. Anim.* ix, 17, speaks thus of the *acalanthis*: *κακόβιοι καὶ κακόχροοι, φῶνὴν μέντοι λιγυρὰν ἔχουσιν*. These words might be applied equally as well to the nightin-

gale. No bird of equal fame is perhaps less known from actual observation. It should be remembered also that the nightingale is not a thrush, but one of the silvidae, or warblers. Pliny, *N. H.* x, 205, has *acanthis in spinis vivit*. The acanthis is the same as the acalanthis. Another gloss from Goetz gives us this information, *acalanthis avis vepribus adsueta*. Both words, *spinis* and *vepribus*, are in harmony with and point to *ruscus*. *Ruscus* is glossed in Du Cange as *μυρρινάκωνθος*, which again points to the bird acalanthis, just as *ruscus*, by the theory under discussion, points to the ruscinia.

Now if the luscinia and acalanthis were confused, we should expect to find traces of very high appreciation for the song of the latter bird. This is exactly what we do find. There were, as we have already noted, only four bird-singers of high esteem among the Greek and Roman poets. It was well-nigh impossible for others to break into this highly esteemed traditional group. We need not, therefore, be surprised that only two references to the acalanthis occur in the Roman poets. The lesser first:

Nyctilon ut cantu rudis exsuperaverit Alcon ?
 Astyle, credibile est, si vincat acanthida cornix,
 Vocalem superet si dirus aedona bubo. — Cal. *Ecl.* 6, 5.

These associations, of course, are symbolical of the impossible. Here the songs of the acalanthis and the nightingale are obviously taken as types of the highest beauty in bird-song, in antithesis to the "raucous calls" of the cornix, and the "lugubrious plaints" of the owl. Erasmus classified the above as popular proverb. The association of the acalanthis and nightingale on the same side of the equation is instructive. The more so if we recall that here the acalanthis takes a place in the proverb usually held by another of the immortal four.

Tum tenuis dare rursus aquas, et pascere rursus
 solis ad occasum, cum frigidus area vesper
 temperat, et saltus reficit iam roscida luna,
 Litoraue alcyonem resonant, acalanthida dumi.

— Virg. *Georg.* iii, 338.

Here we have in Virgil a calm summer scene. Evening approaches. The background of bird-song is portrayed without its usual touch of sorrow, as, for example, in Hor. *Epod.* 2, 26, who in a somewhat similar situation uses *queruntur* of the birds as they sang. Cf. also Ov. *Her.* 15, 151. The association here of the acalanthis with the halcyon, again in company with one of the immortal four, indicates Virgil's high appreciation of the little singer. As Glover points out, it may well be a recollection in the master poet's mind of his boyhood days on the banks of the Mincio. There are only these two references in the Roman poets. But surely if two appreciative nature poets like Virgil and Calpurnius thought so highly of the acalanthis, there is nothing *a priori* improbable in a confusion of the birds and a blending of their names in the folk-mind and observation. Virgil says that the *dumi*, i.e. the thickets, resound. This word and its parallel *dumetum* are glossed by ἀκανθεών, which again points to the bird acalanthis. In this connection Warde Fowler, referring to Lenz, *Botanik der Griechen*, observes that the word ἀκανθίς in Greek does not necessarily mean the thistle, but is applied to all kinds of thorny trees and shrubs, such as the *dumi* in which Virgil makes the voice of the bird resound.

I do not believe for a minute that Virgil confused the acalanthis and nightingale. He was far too good an observer for that. But later, as we should expect, if our hypothesis be correct, others *did* confuse the two birds. Observe now, in view of our discussion, what Servius says in a note on the acalanthis passage in hand: *Acalanthis alii lusciniā esse volunt, alii . . . carduelim.* This means, if it means anything at all, that in the time of Servius the confusion assumed as the source of *rusciniā*, and clearly implied in the glosses, was already in evidence. On this hypothesis alone can we explain the glosses and this Servian note, with their double association, of *lusciniā* on one hand and *acalanthis* on the other. If this theory for the origin of *rusciniā* be accepted, its survival in the *r*-forms of the Romance languages seems to present no serious difficulty.